Before the conflict, I was a worker. I worked on the coast with my father and brothers. But on the coast, the situation was very difficult because we were not paid a good salary and made very little money. Before the conflict, I worked everyday and earned nothing. I was paid, but very little and not enough to pay for basic daily necessities. And worse than that, those who lived here in Tululche, like my parents were sharecroppers. They worked on the coast, but were not paid daily. Instead, what they earned paid for their rent. And so they worked without earning anything. This was what life was like before. Yes, it was calm because you could come and go as you pleased, but it was also very difficult because we did not have adequate salaries, material, or good products. We lived in poverty. This is what life was like before. This land where we lived belonged to an owner. It was not our property. And so, our lives before the armed conflict were very difficult.

In other places and departments, they had already begun to organize to demand salaries, workers’ rights. But before this, we did not know how to organize to obtain these rights. Because we were hearing that we had rights. We were workers, we have rights in our nation. We had rights, but we did not know where to obtain them. This was a very difficult situation, what we experienced before. It’s true, as the older people say, that men met, walking without fear and freely. But, the situation is more one of poverty. We have no education. The people who live here are illiterate, meaning they don’t know how to read, write, or speak in Spanish. As I said before, when I was with my father on the coast and he entered to speak to the administrator, he removed his hat as if to ask for pardon. Anyone in charge at the plantation There, they did not take us into account. Sometimes, the administrators with their horses, if they wanted to pass, would just go right over you. The situation before the conflict was very hard. This is what we say because this is what we lived.

When the conflict arrived, we did not know why. There was a place where people began to reclaim their rights, began to organize, but here in Tululche, we don’t know why the army entered. We were working on the coast and when we returned to our community, to our home, our neighbors told us that we were going to see something. That’s what people were telling us, you are going to see something. What? And they said that in other places, the army had already begun killing people completely(?). Because here, we are close to the Interamerican Highway. And so, there came a time when everytime you looked at the highway, passing were trucks of soldiers down the highway. But before this, the military commissioners came, and they began rounding up the young people and sending them to the barracks. The barracks, according to what people said, and this is what the situation was like before. We were very afraid of being sent to the barracks. For example, during this time, I was only 16 years old. In these times, young people, even if they were only 15 or 16 years old, could be taken by force and sent to the barracks. We, young people, were very afraid of this. But, it didn’t happen. That’s why we were afraid when the military would pass by on the highway that there would arrive a time when they would begin to
massacre. In the first place, as the women said, in a community close to Chiché in our municipality, they began to burn houses, and the people ran away. And the military began to shoot those who didn’t retreat. They would take over a house, set it on fire, and burn it. Afterwards, another time arrived and they began here, on this side of the highway where the entrance to Tululche is located. They began to burn houses, the people fled, and they began to shoot with guns. They entered here, in Tululche also. This is true. And what did they do? All of the people that ran away, as the women said, fled to the mountains, the ravines. There they were able to hide so they wouldn’t be killed immediately. Those that didn’t run away continued to work and live in their homes when the military arrived. They were rounded up and put in their homes, which were set on fire. Here in Tululche, several houses were burned and several families were burned inside of the houses. They were close, the soldiers, they were close and they shot. And those who were unable to run away died there by weapons. Those who saw the army, for example, in this place here, a family was seen going down there, and the army, which was close, launched grenades and killed all of the people. Here, there were several people who this happened to. They killed families in the ravines, groups of people. And if the military did not want to catch people in their homes or where they worked, they wanted to find people hiding, but weren’t able to. So the army entered, and seeing that people left and were hiding in the mountains, the ravines, they began to set fire to all of this land, this forest. They burned this entire mountain. Because they thought that in the mountains, people were hiding, which was true, But the military also looked much further away where people could be hiding. The army thought that people were there in the mountains, the forest, the ravines. That is why they began to burn. This happened during the summer, so if you make a fire, the entire forest burns down. And this is what happened when the time of the armed conflict began. This is what happened. Many people burned inside houses, many houses were burned, and many were robbed of everything they had. There was no one left. The army brought the military commissioners with them, who were civilians, they came together. What’s worse is the idea that there were military commissioners very close to every community because they had knowledge of where people lived, where people were, and where to find and round them up. And so, they came together. That’s why, here, in our community of Tululche, not only did the army come, but both the army and the military commissioners entered. And they knew a lot here. And they came not just once, but many times. That’s why, after hiding, they left here. One day, someone went where they were hiding, And when the notice arrived that the army had retreated, people returned to their houses, and there were some families who did not return because they were afraid so they lived elsewhere. Some went back to the coast, others went to other municipalities. This is what happened during this time because every 3 or 2 days, the army would enter.

For example, during this time, I was married. And, during this time, they killed my wife. We already had children, and they murdered her. They shot her. And so this is what happened, not only to me, but to several families. That’s why, like the women said, in our municipality and especially in our community of Tululche many people have been murdered. That’s why, I say that in our community, there have been several massacres. Massacres, meaning they killed many people. I know that I was not very old, but in this era of the conflict, I was 20 years old, and I felt what happened during the armed conflict.
Many groups of people were murdered in the ravine, in other places. There were places where, because of unity, because it was costly for 2 or 3 people, a woman with her children to run away. So the army reached them and they were killed. That’s what happened.

I remember everything that I said, the massacre in the place here where the hacienda is.

I didn’t see it because I was afraid. They didn’t arrive in a group and the massacre happened below. The family was not able to flee and another person arrived at the house, and they were massacred. In another massacre in the ravine, the people were abandoned there, and they threw a bomb in, killing all the people. And there were other massacres of groups who were kidnapped and of the women in the plaza. Because during this time, one could not go to the plaza, and everyone was afraid because you couldn’t go. And if you did go, it was certain that you would go down. And everyone that gathered in the plaza was taken and has not returned.

I was a witness. I knew of many kidnappings and murders because of a time I was in my house and saw that Candido Noriega was with the army and military commissioners. As the women said, we knew that he was one of them because Candido Noriega lived close to this community. He was very knowledgeable about this place, so he guided all of the military commissioners that came.

There was a part of me that was afraid. We didn’t know how Noriega’s relatives would think. Because Those of us who were witness didn’t know what consequences that might bring. But, the other part of me felt courageous because I had heard in the news that of those most responsible for what happened, no one had been put in jail. And only the groups here, the women fought and became active to succeed in this case. So I had these two feelings.

It is important to show…First, it is important so injustice does not continue. Because we want justice. In our community, during this period of violence, the epoch of the armed conflict, we organized. We were not able to live as one person alone, but by joining ideas to stay alive. If we were divided, surely, we would all fall, we would all die. What we did was join together, look for ideas, and organize. And inside of our organization here, we looked for ideas. We are illiterate, but we heard that there are laws and we have rights. And for this reason we organized, to look for our rights and to order that the law be complied with. Because the law says that one cannot be murdered without it being a crime, without being in conflict with the law. But, we saw in our community how lots of families and people died without crimes being declared. We are workers, we are peasants, we are people. And so, there began the trial. And why did we know this person? He guided the military commissioners, the army. And why do the government and those responsible during time of the armed internal conflict, why do they not conflict with the law? That’s why we gathered and organized. Perhaps, not all. A group of women and a group of men began this.
Before the trial, we were organized by groups. But, what happened was that the community was not active enough to continue with what we was looking for, which was a necessity. Because there were some people who became uninvolved, and in this case, those of us who organized remained a small group. We had courage because when the armed conflict happened, we had something else to deal with. Not only did the armed conflict happen, but after, began a time when the owner of this land sold the forest to a business. The businessman began to cut down all of the trees, all of this mountain. When this happened, we had courage, although some were sad and crying. That’s why we said business entered into this place of ours. We began to fight against this, the chopping down of trees in the mountains. And this lasted 12 years, the business agreement allowing cutting down of these trees, what we have here. Because here there are mountains that have lots of trees. We were sad that they killed our brothers, our relatives, but here we began the fight against this business. This fight last many years and now we have the right to denounce what we want and to fight. And the business lasted here for 12 years. They defeated us. They continued to chop down the trees on these mountains. But although they succeeded in taking the trees, we achieved something else. Because of these ideas, when the time arrived as the women said, because they did not fight against those responsible for the conflict, we began with this trial. This is the case that we brought since before or after the armed conflict.

Yes, now yes. Now, we are meeting, we continue to demand our rights. But what is happening now with what we are demanding is that the government does not take us into account. In the other case, perhaps, the continuation of the organization has been a success because what we did is win the rejection of the business. And the other success is that this land is no longer a plantation, but has now passed into the hands of the community. And so this is a success. Those are two successes we have had after the armed conflict. And now what we are thinking is of securing a place where we can get help so that we can all of the victims. But, still we don’t have a place from which to enter. This is what we are thinking now, how to do something to enter into the government so they take into account this community, which suffered the armed conflict and continues to with a difficult situation because of the poverty. We don’t have the basic necessities, that’s why we want to say this to the public. The situation that we have is poverty. That is why we are thinking of how to reach the government and have this community taken into account, some help, but nothing now. We want to demand, that’s why here we demand justice. Because injustice has already occurred in what we suffered. But, as I already said, we heard that the peace accords were signed years ago, but the peace accords have not achieved anything.

I want to ask that you all, perhaps, pass the voice of our people to other nations and other peoples. Perhaps, you all will be the spokespeople of our people so that other nations and other authorities hear and take into account this community and this people. There are necessities. We need development, we need education, we need help, especially for us here. We are a very distant place. We are a very difficult place because we have nothing, no ideas, no education, nothing. Yes, we now have a school, but it was only recently built. But we need a lot of support. That is what we are demanding because what always
happens is that the government does not take us into account. Us, here, need something, and that’s why we ask that you pass on our voice.